

***La Meseta (The Plateau by Sara Valentina Alvarez Echavarria)***

Today I allow myself to miss my soul,  
or well, my home from this unknown place.

Almost as unknown as who will I be tomorrow?

How will be the next sunset? Or what is the secret of the rain?

I think, write, and live with a melancholy that weighs,

an enormous and heavy melancholy,

as massive as the clouds that form in the sky

from the highlands that stubbornly I miss today.

From a gray, monotonous, and cold city

I find myself in an endless process of metamorphosis,

made out of boldness and expectations that seem

impossible to reach, impossible to settle, impossible to end.

It doesn't end because I keep finding the woman I was,

I hug her, I connect with her, and I grab her hand;

I invite her to watch sunsets that I imagine in the center of the city

ignoring its buildings, its traffic,

its noise, its sadness, and its lack of color.

From this unwelcoming place, I try not to forget,

and I repeat to myself over and over again,

6 ° 38' 50 " N 75 ° 27' 38 " W to go home

and 3,994 kilometers to reduce my fears.

But I interrupt myself in the middle of the tedium

souvenir product, which I feel under my skin,

My zamba<sup>1</sup> and brown skin, which now is pale and dull

from a cloudy winter that steals the light and grace  
of those who are subjected to living it.

I get lost in the details, the memories, the moments,  
the life that has already passed and  
that I still feel incapable of letting go.

Once in a while, I allow myself to close my eyes  
to feel and see beyond the chaos, boldness, and  
vulnerability located in my being center.

I allow myself to feel the warm winds of August,  
the sun kissing my cinnamon skin, and  
the cold of April touching the tip of my nose.

I allow myself to see the colorful kites,  
the children running in the plaza,  
and my friends laughing at each other after a couple polas<sup>2</sup>.

I still find myself remembering faces, names, and voices  
in my attempt to make them eternal,  
I repeat them and run through my mind,  
I walk them as long ago I roamed the town,  
its streets, parks, and monuments.

Among so many faces, names and voices,  
I try to highlight the ones that make me feel the most alive,  
the ones that hurt me the most, the ones that burn my soul  
As the midday burning sun in the church atrium.

One day not too distant, I hope to return,  
one day very soon, I hope to be cloud, colors, plateau, and sunset.

One day not too far away, I will meet with the North,  
with the mountains, the birds, the clouds, and the blue sky.  
I will meet again with the faces, the names, and the voices.  
From this cold and achromatic city,  
I embrace the Northern mountain roots  
that saw my mom giving me life, birth, and name.  
From this unknown place, I promise to return  
to my soul, to my home and be.

- 1. Zamba/o:** Zambo or cafuzo are racial terms used in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires and occasionally today to identify individuals in the Americas who are of mixed African and Amerindian ancestry. Historically, the racial cross between African slaves and Amerindians was referred to as a “zambaggoa,” then “Zambo,” then “sambo.”
- 2. Pola/s:** From “La Pola,” a very popular beer brand in Colombia, especially in the Cundiboyacense highlands, during the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> Named in honor of **Policarpa Salavarrieta**, nicknamed “La Pola,” a heroic female figure of Colombian Independence. <sup>2</sup> Polas and Birras are the colloquial names for any type of Colombian beer independent of the brand. This name continued to be used as a synonym for a beer after the Bavaria brewery discontinued “La Pola.”